



# DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

## INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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### NATION-WIDE SURVEY OF FUR CATCH SHOWS LAX HANDLING OF RESOURCE

At least 18-1/2 million fur animals were trapped in 43 States and Alaska last year, according to estimates compiled by the Fish and Wildlife Service in a Nation-wide survey of the annual fur catch in this country, it was announced today by Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes.

Officials of the Service, however, believe that this figure is far below the real annual catch. They said that many States were not keeping an adequate check on the total catch of fur animals within their boundaries.

Louisiana led the list with a reported catch of 2,546,000 fur animals, some 2,200,000 being muskrats. Maryland was second, reporting a take of 1,500,000 muskrats. Third was Wisconsin, reporting 1,443,000 fur animals taken; fourth, Michigan, 1,168,000; fifth, Illinois, 996,900; sixth, Ohio, 958,600; and seventh, New York and Kansas with some 850,000 fur animals each.

The United States imports almost half of the furs sold on American markets, according to Frank Ashbrook, in charge of the Service's Section of Fur Resources, Division of Wildlife Research. Because of war conditions abroad, the shipping of furs to the United States is greatly reduced, he said, although caracul lamb and rabbit pelts have greatly increased during the last six months.

"If the demand for furs in the United States continues," he asserted, "a larger number of fur animals will be trapped to meet that demand in this country, unless protective measures are taken to prevent overtrapping."

Ashbrook explained that regulations governing the trapping of fur animals are made by the individual States, not by the Federal government. He urged State officials to make careful checks on the annual trapping of their fur crops. "In view of the already precarious condition of many fur species," he said, "trapping must be limited and shorter seasons promulgated to maintain the supply."

In previous reports, Ashbrook has declared that the value of the raw fur crop in the United States is approximately \$50,000,000 annually. He claims that unless adequate steps are taken to preserve the fur animals in the wild, this country may suddenly wake up to the fact that it has depleted the supply.

The information regarding the numbers and origin of various animals trapped annually in the United States is meager. Lack of authentic data in this conservation field prevents any intelligent estimate of the annual take of furs, he said.

"At present, we are so lax that we don't know whether we are producing 10,000,000 fur animals a year and harvesting 15,000,000, or producing 20,000,000 and taking 25,000,000," Ashbrook declared.

"One thing is certain," he continued, "and that is that this country is taking many more fur animals each year than are being produced."

The results of the nation-wide survey of the annual fur-animal catch was reported in a mimeographed leaflet, Wildlife Leaflet BS-170, entitled "The Annual Fur Catch of the United States," which is available to the public upon request.

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NOTE TO EDITORS: The following is a summary of the fur catch as reported by each State. Unless specified, the returns listed are for the fiscal year indicated. Except when indicated, figures were obtained by the State from trappers required to report their annual catch. The first, second, and third animal heading the list in each State is named in that order.

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ALABAMA.--No report. Does not require reports from trappers and fur dealers.

ALASKA.--Calendar year 1939. Total, 553,696 animals of 20 species. Muskrat 417,442; mink, 42,883; and beaver, 31,397.

PRIBILOF ISLANDS.--Calendar year 1939. Total, 61,502 animals of 3 species. Seal, 60,473; blue fox, 1,018; and white fox, 11.

ARIZONA.--Calendar year 1939. Total, 1,579 animals of 10 species. Fox (all species) 464; coyote, 314; and ring-tailed cat, 215. (Figures represent the catch of those who reported but, according to the State, they should be multiplied by 10 to give the approximate total catch.)

ARKANSAS.--1940. Total, 464,283 animals of 11 species (and a miscellaneous group). Opossum, 341,830; common large skunk, 52,912; and raccoon, 47,439.

CALIFORNIA.--1939. Total, 60,549 animals of 17 species (and a miscellaneous group). Muskrat, 36,216; common large skunk, 7,381; and raccoon, 4,067.

COLORADO.--No report. (State recently passed law empowering Commission to get data, but law has not been in effect long enough for figures to be available.)

CONNECTICUT.--Calendar year 1937. Total, 24,319 animals of 7 species. Muskrat, 11,507; common large skunk, 5,082; and fox (all species), 3,783.

DELAWARE.--1939. (Figures are estimates from license returns.) Total, 187,025 animals of 4 species. Muskrat, 180,000; opossum, 4,000; and raccoon, 3,000.

FLORIDA.--1939. Total, 75,101 animals of 4 species. Raccoon, 69,524; opossum, 3,036, and skunk, 2,039.

GEORGIA.--1938. (State does not require trappers to make annual report.) Total, 19,500 animals of 13 species (and a miscellaneous group). Raccoon, 11,736; opossum, 3,594; and mink, 1,786.

IDAHO.--1939. Total, 235,026 animals of 15 species. Muskrat, 205,698; coyote, 14,217; and weasel, 4,172.

ILLINOIS.--1939. Total, 996,998 animals of 6 species. Muskrat, 729,077; opossum, 132,585; and mink, 48,581.

INDIANA.--1938. (State requires only licensed fur buyers to report on purchases.) Total, 711,801 animals of 6 species. Muskrat, 433,116; opossum, 170,039; and common large skunk, 49,582.

IOWA.--1939. (Fur buyers report purchases; trappers out-of-State sales.) Total, 556,815 animals of 11 species. Muskrat, 308,015; common large skunk, 124,322; and spotted skunk, 43,971.

KANSAS.--1940. (Trappers not required to report. Figures from fur dealers.) Total, 853,857 animals of 12 species (and a miscellaneous group.) Miscellaneous, 348,065; opossum, 155,945; common large skunk, 151,800; and muskrat, 119,918.

KENTUCKY.--No report. Does not require trappers to make annual report.

LOUISIANA.--1937. Total, 2,546,820 animals of 6 species (and a miscellaneous group.) Muskrat, 2,200,520; opossum, 128,000; and raccoon, 86,500.

MAINE.--1938. Total, 60,121 animals of 9 species. Muskrat, 39,133; red fox, 5,614; and common large skunk, 4,499.

MARYLAND.--1940. (No report required from either trappers or fur dealers.)

State game warden estimates muskrats taken at 1,500,000.

MASSACHUSETTS.--1938. Total, 56,123 animals of 10 species. Muskrat, 38,746;

common large skunk, 8,367; and red fox, 4,122.

MICHIGAN.--1938. Total, 1,168,224 animals of 12 species. Muskrat, 782,924;

common large skunk, 119,180; and opossum, 96,586.

MINNESOTA.--1938. Total, 190,005 animals of 12 species. Weasel, 76,315; common

large skunk, 61,157; and mink, 33,089.

MISSISSIPPI.--1939. (State requires no report from trappers, but about 75 per-  
cent return reports to Commission.) Total, 52,228 animals of 8 species.

Opossum, 22,008; raccoon, 11,284; and mink, 8,652.

MISSOURI.--1935. (State requires no report from either trappers or fur dealers.)

Total, 786,250 animals of 8 species. Opossum, 370,300; and common large skunk,  
205,400; and muskrat, 110,600. (Figures obtained by corresponding with fur  
dealers.)

MONTANA.--1938. (Requires no reports from trappers, except on beavers and when  
furs are shipped out-of-State.) Total, 76,192 animals of 7 species. Muskrat,  
51,902; beaver, 8,427; and coyote, 7,090.

NEBRASKA.--1940. No report required from trappers except on beavers, 4,000 of  
which were estimated to have been trapped.

NEVADA.--No report. Does not require annual report either from trappers or fur  
dealers.

NEW HAMPSHIRE.--1939. Total, 24,249 animals of 10 species. Muskrat, 16,551;  
fox (all species), 3,667; and raccoon, 1,567.

NEW JERSEY.--Calendar year 1937. Total, 221,928 animals of 7 species. Muskrat,  
119,831; squirrel, 84,205; and common large skunk, 10,986.

NEW MEXICO.--1940. Total, 35,630 animals of 13 species (and a miscellaneous group.) Muskrat, 11,841; coyote, 9,982; and common large skunk, 6,244.

NEW YORK.--1937. Total, 438,701 animals of 11 species. Squirrel, 188,903; muskrat, 157,494; and common large skunk, 36,701. (Commission believes figures should be increased 50 percent because of large numbers of licensees who did not report.)

NORTH CAROLINA.--1940. (Requires no report from trappers. Figures obtained from fur dealers and are only estimates of catch.) Total, 198,200 animals of 8 species. Muskrat, 72,000; raccoon, 58,000; and opossum, 56,000.

NORTH DAKOTA.--1940. (Does not require reports either from trappers or fur dealers. Figures are estimates.) Total, 225,450 animals of 6 species. Skunk, 175,000; weasel, 25,000; and fox (all species), 15,000.

OHIO.--1940. (Requires no report from trappers. Figures from licensed fur dealers.) Total, 958,617 animals of 8 species. Muskrat, 536,376; opossum, 214,200; and common large skunk, 157,579.

OKLAHOMA.--1939. Total, 490,856 animals of 11 species (and a miscellaneous group.) Opossum, 361,139; common large skunk, 94,947; and spotted skunk, 19,565.

OREGON.--1939. Total, 51,487 animals of 12 species. Muskrat, 37,492; mink, 5,301; and common large skunk, 3,612.

PENNSYLVANIA.--1939. Total, 723,329 animals of 11 species. Muskrat, 301,275; common large skunk, 229,168; and opossum, 103,516.

RHODE ISLAND.--No report. Requires no report either from trappers or fur dealers.

SOUTH CAROLINA.--1939. (State requires no report from trappers. Figures taken from out-of-State shipments.) Total, 51,849 animals of 8 species. Raccoon, 18,307; opossum, 16,085; muskrat, 7,732; and mink, 7,183.

SOUTH DAKOTA.--No report. Requires no report from trappers. Estimate 1,000 .

beavers taken each year in 1937, 1938, and 1939.

TENNESSEE.--No report. Trappers not required to report. In 1938 when fur-tax was in effect took 211,401 animals of 9 species. Opossum, 133,993; common large skunk, 31,966; and muskrat, 29,928.

TEXAS.--1939. (Figures obtained from fur dealers. Trappers not required to report.) Total, 729,244 animals of 15 species (and a miscellaneous group.) Opossum, 308,060; muskrat, 229,734; and common large skunk, 81,542.

UTAH.--No report. Trappers required to report only beavers taken. In 1938 593 beavers taken.

VERMONT.--1939. (Trappers not required to report. Figures taken from fur dealers required to report purchases.) Total, 100,444 animals of 8 species. Muskrat, 62,611; common large skunk, 19,146; and red fox, 8,810.

VIRGINIA.--1939. (Trappers not required to report. Figures taken from fur dealers required to report purchases.) Total, 412,677 animals of 12 species. Muskrat, 165,005; opossum, 125,716; and common large skunk, 84,697.

WASHINGTON.--1939. Total, 86,502 animals of 12 species. Muskrat, 63,010; coyote, 7,750; and mink, 6,764.

WEST VIRGINIA.--1939. (Requires no report from trappers. Figures are estimates from fur dealers.) Total, 431,603 animals of 8 species (and a miscellaneous group.) Common large skunk, 168,841; opossum, 159,844; and muskrat, 64,693.

WISCONSIN.--1939. Total, 1,443,802 animals of 14 species. Squirrel, 1,176,161; muskrat, 117,391; and skunk, 70,768.

WYOMING.--No report. Requires no report from trappers except for beavers, 6,212 of which were taken in 1939.

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